

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT II**

**INFORMANTS: PHOUSITA HUY [CAMBODIA]
INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI
TRANSLATOR: CHHAN TOUCH
DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2001**

**A = ALI
P = HUY
T = TOUCH**

Tape 01.22

Note: throughout the interview Chhan Touch often translates for Phousita Huy. I am unable to transcribe the conversation that takes place in Khmer between the two of them.

A: Okay, this is interview with Phousita Huy, December 5th, 2001. Did I say your last name right?

P: Huy.

A: Huy, okay. So first a little bit of background information, where and when were you born?

P: In Cambodia, 13 of February, 1967.

A: 1967? Okay. And what part of Cambodia did you come from?

P: In Phnom Penh.

A: In the city?

P: Yes.

A: And what part of the city? A certain neighborhood?

P: Phnom Penh.

A: Just Phnom Penh?

P: Yah.

A: Is there a neighborhood in the city, a smaller section? You know, like Lowell has Acre, Pawtucketville.

T for P: Yah, Kilo #6.

A: Okay. And what did your parents do for work?

T for P: Finance.

P: Finance.

A: Finance, okay.

P: My father is finance, and my home, and my mother stay home.

A: She stayed home. Okay. And how many brothers and sister do you have?

P: Two brother and one sister.

A: And where do you come in, oldest, youngest?

P: I'm the youngest.

A: You're the youngest. (P: Yes) Okay. Where did you go to school at?

P: To school? Before [unclear] I go to French school.

A: You go to a French school? (P: Yah) And what was the name of that school?

P: [Unclear] (A: Okay) And after I went to [Wat Phnoms?].

A: [Wat Phnoms?] (P: School) The school at the temple?

P: No. (A: No) It's a name of a school.

A: Okay. All right. So it's not really a Wat? Okay.

P: Near the [unclear].

A: Okay. And did you take up certain classes there?

P: Yah.

A: What were they?

T for P: Basically you know, like French (P: French), French language. (A: Okay) Just French, no Khmer.

A: No Khmer at all huh. So you learned a lot of French. Now were your teachers French?

P: Me?

A: Were your teachers French, or were they Khmer?

P: French.

A: They were from France?

P: Yah.

A: Okay. All right. And did you know your grandparents?

P: Grandparents, yes.

A: And what was, what was your father's parents' names?

P: Huy [Chit?].

A: Was his father? (P: Yah) And how about your father's mother?

P: Father's mother, I can't say it.

T: Father and mother, like [unclear].

P: No, I do not remember.

A: You don't remember her name? (P: No) And how about your mother's father?

P: My mother? Uh, [Kumtun?]

T: No, no, no, mother father.

P: Mother father?

T: [Unclear]

P: I don't remember.

A: You don't remember. How about your mother's mother?

P: Mother?

T: No. Mother's mother. [Unclear]

A: Okay. You don't remember her name? Okay. And how about your parents' names? Your father's name?

P: My father [unclear] his name is [unclear]. (A: Okay) My mother she named [Kumtrun].

A: Okay. And what do you remember about your childhood? What do you remember? Any stories when you were a kid?

P: I speak Khmer really that's clearer than English, okay.

[Touch begins to translate her memories]

T for P: When I was in French school every Thursday we do not have classes. And I remember that my mother always took me to the dance school.

A: Okay.

T for P: Every Thursday. (A: Okay) You know, I was in dance school approximately one year, and I was young at that time. By then the Khmer Rouge took over.

A: Okay. So what do you remember about the school before the Khmer Rouge took over?

T for P: I do not clearly remember because I was too young then.

A: What do you remember about the Khmer [Khum?]

T for P: I remember what happened when we went to, when we were evacuated from the city. I was placed in Children Mobile Team.

A: Is that the name of a town?

T: No these are team. (A: Oh) You know in each village they create a work force (A: Okay) and they put children in a Children Mobile Team where they move kids, you know, age between five to ten, from one area to another. The idea of mobile all around. That's why they call it the Children Mobile Team.

A: Children's Mobile Team? (T: Yah) Okay. And do you remember the day they came and took over Phnom Penh?

T for P: April 17, 1975.

A: Okay. That's the date, but what happened that day? Does she remember what happened on that day?

T for P: You know it was the Cambodian New Year. We were celebrating in the house, especially when we found out that the Khmer Rouge would come in. And we were happy because we thought that peace, you know, we would have peace by now. You know after that they came to the city, you know, they told us to get to our house and prepare our luggage and everything, and we had to go. And we started crying. We were told that we would be asked to get out from the city for at least three days. So my mother tried to, you know, collect whatever necessities for our life. We buried our jewelries you know, money and all those precious stones.

A: Did ah, did they let you, did they search you before you left to see if you had money?

P: They didn't.

T: No they did not.

A: And (--) Go ahead.

T for P: And then you know by then, and then we started you know, we were forced to get from our home walking on the road.

A: And which direction could you go from the city? (T: You know, outbound) North, south? Towards Battambang or?

T for P: Northern part. (A: Okay) Yah, the northern part.

A: Now was your whole family together at that time?

P: Yah.

A: Okay. Your father and grandparents, everybody?

P: No. Some family separate, (A: Okay) and some, my father, no.

T for P: My relatives like my cousin, my aunt and uncle, all of us we did not get together by then. You know, we were sent out to different direction. However for my close sibling, yes we went out together.

A: And then when did they send you to the Mobile Camp? Did they separate you from your mother then?

T for P: Okay now I went to, I stopped in two different places. First we went to Kompong Cham Providence where we stayed temporarily. And then we were sent to Kompong Thom where we stayed, in the Kompong Thom Providence where I was sent to the Children Mobile Team.

A: Okay.

T for P: She cannot remember the year because she was too small.

P: I can't remember. I don't recall the number.

A: Now at this time were you, were your parents taken away from you, or you stayed with your parents the whole time?

P: No, separated.

T for P: Yah, I was separated from my parents when I was sent to Children Mobile Team.

A: Okay, and that was in Kompong Thom? And where were your parents sent?

T for P: My mother was sent to they call Women Mobile Team. Only my father was allowed to stay in the village, because he was sick.

A: Okay.

[Cough]

A: And what did you do with the Children's Mobile Team?

T for P: Normally what I will do, we gather manure, we helped to plant rice. (A: Okay) We built big [unclear], you know, with older people.

A: Okay. And what, how was it? Was it hard, or easy, or?

P: It's hard.

A: Okay. Why was it hard?

T for P: Because I never work hard, and I was just a little girl. And you know, I was supposed to work really hard. All those heavy work.

A: Yah. Was there enough food to eat?

P: Not enough.

A: Where was all the rice going?

T for P: Normally you know, eat only [unclear] most of the time. We ate some rice during harvest season.

A: Okay. Now when you were doing that did you keep up dancing?

P: No.

T for P: Okay, I never practiced then openly. However when I was sent to Children Mobile Team, we were sent to far away like jungle. (A: Okay) And every now and then, you know, I learned how to dance one dance, so every now and then I would get out with all my close friends and I danced, get to show them. Yah, sometimes you know, I danced in the mosquito net so nobody would see me.

A: In the mosquito net? (T: Yah) Okay. And why did, why did you have to hide when you danced?

T for P: I cannot dance openly because dance was prohibited then. I could be severely punished.

A: So how long did you work in that place?

P: Three years.

A: Three years, and then where did you go after that?

T for P: Okay, 1979 you know the Vietnamese government took over Cambodia, and they have a new regime that came to Cambodia, and the Khmer Rouge was ousted from power. And then I returned back to the city.

A: Okay. Do you remember when the Vietnamese soldiers came through where you were living?

T for P: You know, we were in the working field you know, harvesting crops, and then people start, started running you know, saying you know, that the Vietnamese came and all them ran. And she ran with them too. But she never actually saw any Vietnamese soldiers.

A: Okay. And then from there went straight to Phnom Penh?

T for P: Okay, she returned back to the village where her mom and her dad were living.
(A: Okay) Ah, I think her dad was dead by then. You know, her dad was dead by then, but she returned to the Village [Bachau].

A: [Bachau], and that's in Kompong Thom?

T: Yah, [Bachau] Village where her mom was staying. And by then her father passed away. And she run away from the Children Mobile Team and she came to that village.

A: Okay.

T: And then from the village she and her siblings who survived the Khmer Rouge, just walked you know, to Phnom Penh.

A: Okay. So your father died? (P: Yes) He died of sickness?

P: Yes. No food to eat.

A: Okay.

T: Starvation.

P: Starvation.

A: How about other family? Did they all survive?

T for P: I lost two members in my family, my father and my brother.

A: And how did your brother die?

T for P: Had diarrhea, severe diarrhea, and he died, probably from dehydration. They haven't seen him, or knew where he was buried. We heard that he was dead. [Coughs]

A: So when you went back to Phnom Penh how did the city look?

T for P: When I came, first came to Phnom Penh I was not [actually in the city], because you have to know that the whole city was sealed off for one year. (A: Really?) Yah, (P: Yah) the whole city of Phnom Penh. And I was living in suburban area.

A: Okay. And why did they seal the city off? This is the Vietnamese?

P: Yah.

A: Why did they do that?

T for P: She said, I, she didn't know why, but I know why.

A: Okay, you can tell them then.

T: You know in 1979 I went to Phnom Penh City with my brother. Probably I was one of the first groups who got in, (A: Really) because my brother was a musician. (A: Okay) So I waited till my brother, and the whole city was like a ghost town. It was a ghost town practically. I walked into the whole city. There was nobody, just me. What happened is you know, they have a lot of, the Khmer Rouge compiled a lot of stuff you know, like plate, like silver you know, in a certain spot [unclear], and all of that. And practically the Vietnamese government just took all of them and they closed the whole city and they emptied the whole thing from the whole city. It took them more than a year to completely empty the whole city. I was there.

A: So the Khmer Rouge from all around Cambodia brought the silverware and the things, (T: Everything to the city) to the city?

T: Yah, everything to the city.

A: And the Vietnamese took all of that away.

T: I know for sure, I saw them.

A: Wow. So after one year you were able to go into Phnom Penh?

T for P: Almost toward the end of 1979 my mother has a friend who worked in the factory, one of the factory in Phnom Penh, [Escade?], what they call [Escade?]. And so her Mom move to live with that lady. And in that factory they decided to create a dance group. (A: Really?) Yah. (A: Okay) And you know, this dance troupe were taken you know, for like a contest (A: Okay) in, probably in 1980.

A: And how many people were in the dance troupe for the company?

P: Um, maybe twenty. (A: Okay)

T for P: I went there and I went to perform, and I got the first, you know, I got like number one, the first prize or recognition I should say by then, and I met my former Master teacher. [Name unclear]. She was my former Master before the Khmer Rouge took over. (A: Okay) After she saw me so she asked me to come back.

A: Okay. And you (--) Before the Khmer Rouge you were dancing with who?

P: [Name unclear].

A: That's the name? It's a woman?

P: Yes, [unclear].

A: Okay. And tell us about her. Where did she come from?

T for P: You know her, that what we call that [Esteem] Master [Unclear]. She was one of the oldest then teacher from the [Unclear] era. [Unclear] is the father of the [unclear].

A: Okay.

T for P: [Unclear], you know. She was a dancer during that time when she [unclear] was really young, about eight. (A: Wow, okay) Yah, so she survived the Khmer Rouge, and she became one of the, probably one of the most important individual you know, to revitalize the classical dance in Cambodia.

A: Do you know anything about her personal background? Where she was born exactly, and where her parents came from?

T for P: She was born in [Samtok?] village in the Kompong Cham Province. (A: Okay) She had documentation about you know, that Master, but she cannot, doesn't recall it right.

A: That's fine. That's fine. So you started dancing, you went, you left the company dance troupe and you went with her?

T for P: Yes I left you know, the dance group at the factory [Escade?], and I took like a test to enter a University of Fine Art in 1980.

A: Okay. And what was the state of the university at that time?

T for P: Okay, by the time I got back to the University of Fine Art, the school had been recently prepared. (A: Okay) But however you know, we did not have separate classes because of the limitation, space limitation. So our group of dancers got together. A variety of art, like music, you know, dance, sculpture, painting, and all that got together into one big hall, because there was no space. (A: Really) There was no space. So they mixed together.

A: Okay. The government ran the school? (P: Yes) Okay

T for P: One year later, '81, the government gave scholarship you know, to student of University of Fine Arts. (A: Okay) And all of them you know, they went to live in the dormitory.

A: Okay.

T for P: Yah, we eat together in like a common kitchen. Like they have one small apartment, they would be like ten students stayed together and everything together.

A: Now what kind of dance did you do, classical?

P: Classical dance.

A: And that's what you had done before Khmer [unclear]?

P: Yes.

A: And how many, how many students dancing with you at the first class?

P: More than 100.

A: Okay. And did you perform after you learned, or during your school did you perform (P: Yes) outside of the school? (P: Umhm) And where did you perform?

P: Outside the country.

A: Okay. They sent you around? (P: Yes) And where did you go?

P: Outside the country. Japan? (T: Japan, yah) Japan, Korea, United States. (A: Really) Yah, and (--)

T: China.

A: So how long did you go outside of the country?

P: One month.

A: Just one month?

P: Yes.

A: And you went to all those countries?

T: Each time.

P: No, for each time one month.

A: Okay. So where did you guys go first?

P: India.

A: India. And how did you feel when you left Cambodia?

P: Excited. (A: Yah) Very excited.

A: And how many cities did you go to in India?

P: Maybe two or five.

A: Okay. What did you think of the people there?

T for P: I always thought that Cambodia was a very poor country until when I got to India. I was surprised to find out that Cambodia was not the only poor country. I went to the city call Locknow in India. And ever there they didn't use animal, [unclear] to drag the carriage. And I never actually saw that. I heard you know, from the story from the movie, and you know, but then I saw with my own eyes. And I saw that you know, they make a small house made from clay, but rather than people who are living, you're not suppose to live in that house, but rather cow, you know were living in the house and people are living outside. They worship you know, the cow.

A: Okay. And did you meet like the President of India, the Prime Minister, or anybody?

P: No.

A: Did you ever meet [Sihanok]?

T: Who did you meet in India?

P: Huh?

T: Who did you meet in India?

T for P: Yes. Yah, I went there not for any, to see any VIP or anything like that, but we went up for the [unclear] Festival. Yah, we met some [minister of culture] you know, and influential people in India, but we didn't actually meet any VIP people.

A: Okay. How about other interesting stories going around to China or Japan and Korea?

T for P: The second trip I went outside of Cambodia was Japan. (A: Okay) What I saw in Japan is very modernized country, and I feel sorry for my country. (A: Really?) Yah, I felt sorry for my country. Yah, because in Japan during school hours children were not allowed to get out and go to play, or they would get arrested. And then you know, in Japan there is no thief, you know, no robber. It's not like in Cambodia.

A: Any funny stories about your travel, or your dancing over there, or any other country?

P: [Unclear] Disneyland. It was fun for Disneyland [unclear].

A: You went to Disneyland in Japan? I didn't even know they had one there.

P: Big!

A: Now you came to the U.S. on a trip? (P: Yes) And where did you dance at in the U.S.?

P: Classical dance.

A: Where?

P: In Lowell.

A: In Lowell.

P: Washington DC, Washington State, California, Maine. (A: Really?) Yah, in Maine.

A: And what year was this when you first came?

P: In 1990.

A: 1990. Okay. And tell us about coming to Lowell for the first time. What did you think?

P: In Lowell I stayed one day.

A: Did you see any of the stores, or meet any of the people?

P: No. No.

A: Nothing.

P: Yah nothing, just I met the people. Interesting I met him.

A: You met your husband? (P: Yah) But you knew him before, didn't you?

P: Yes, he my friend.

A: So what did you think when you saw him again? Surprised?

P: Yah.

A: You didn't know she was coming, did you?

T: No, I didn't know that. I thought she might be coming. I thought. But you know by then you hadn't seen again for seven years.

A: Now how did you guys meet, in school, in Cambodia?

T: English school.

P: English school [unclear].

A: So tell us about the tour around the U.S. Was it tiring, too long, too short?

T: [Unclear] about probably two months, but I had a wonderful time. So you know, the time becomes very short. I had a good time, but sometime I was afraid too, because there were people who defected.

A: Okay.

T: So you know, police would you know, go after, to find those people you know, who defected, but at the same time I found it was a lot of fun. (A: Okay) You know, wherever we went you know, we were guarded heavily, preventing us from escaping or running away.

A: Okay. How did, how did the people defect? How did they run away?

T: There were some people who you know, sneaked out during the night, you know, with their luggage. Just that nobody knew until when the morning came and they were gone.

P: And one girl eloped [unclear].

A: She's still here in Lowell?

T: No, no.

P: No, Phnom Penh.

T: Yah, practically she just walked out.

A: Oh, she defected in Lowell? (T: Yah) Really? What was her name?

P: [Name unclear- sound like Masa di]

A: [Masa di]? That's her whole name?

P: Yah, [Nit Masa di]. It was simple I saw that too, you know. She simply walked out of the restaurant they call La Lune, La Lune Restaurant. [Our business there] (A: Sure) She just walked, got into the car, her brother's car.

A: Her brother lived in Lowell?

P: No, in Canada.

T: Canada.

A: In Canada.

P: Yah.

A: And that was it? Nobody tried to stop her?

T: The police tried, but (--)

P: My teacher called her to come back, but she say no.

A: And nobody ever saw her again?

T for P: All there was, was crying you know, missing her. [Masa di] was one of my good friends, but she refused to come back.

A: Why did people defect?

P: They want to stay.

T: Why? Why did they defect?

T for P: And there were older people who decided not to defect because they had their family back in Cambodia. Their husband, wife, children. For the single one, the reason why they didn't defect, because they love their culture. They wanted you know, to go back to help rebuild their culture, and they feel obligated to do so.

A: So after you left the United States you went back to Cambodia? (P: Yes) And you were still part of the, was it the National Troupe?

P: Ah, no. University of Fine Art.

A: University Troupe?

P: Yah.

A: Okay. Was that considered the National Troupe, or no?

T for P: Okay, there are two groups. One group they called call National Group. The National Group, they can get to perform. They ask the group from the University of Fine Art, it's more than just performing. You know they supposed to attend regular class learning everything like everybody else, but at the same time they have dance, (A: Okay) dance, you know, to include with that, one of the subjects.

A: So how long did you go to school for?

P: Ten years.

A: Ten years.

P: And I become a teacher.

A: And you became a teacher of?

P: The University of Fine Arts.

A: You did? Wow, for the dancing.

P: Yes.

A: And why were you selected to be a teacher?

T for P: Okay, because my group was a well talented group. So they decided to keep my group as instructor, or teacher. (A: Okay) And people who do not have good, you know, or do not have an excellent talent will be selected as a regular dancer.

A: Okay. And how long did you teach for in Phnom Penh?

P: Four years.

A: Okay. And did you have a lot of good students?

P: Yes.

A: Who were some of the good, the best students you had?

T for P: She said one of the students, her name is [unclear]. She came here last September to perform, yah, is one of them.

A: Okay. And did you always teach the classical dance?

P: Just classical dance.

A: Never the folk dance?

P: No.

A: Now did you work on finding the old dance Masters?

T: What do you mean find?

A: You know, after the Khmer Rouge had kicked out, did they go find the old people to relearn some of the stuff?

T for P: Then what they did, you know, they went to all those old [unclear].

A: Okay.

T for P: Very few of them left alive.

A: Really? Who were some of the other people besides your individual teacher?

P: [Names some people].

T for P: There were only three Masters in school, (A: Only three?) in school, but ah (--) There were only three, three old, probably considered to be the oldest dancer, only three of them, and the rest of them four or five more, approximately about 50 years old.

A: Okay. What were the names of the three oldest ones?

T: She just mentioned earlier.

P: [Names them again]

A: Okay. Now after four years what did you do?

P: I came to the United States.

A: Okay. So what year was that?

P: And I got married.

A: You got married? (P: Yah) How did that happen?

P: What you mean what happened?

A: How did you get married? How did you see him again?

P: Yah, in 1995. (A: Okay) I came to the United States again.

A: Did you come to dance?

P: No, for study. (A: To study) Research study.

A: Research study? Where did you do that at?

P: At the Jacob's [Pillow]?

A: Yah.

P: For one month.

A: One month. Okay.

P: After that I met him and married in Lowell. (A: Really) Not in Lowell. [Lancaster], Connecticut.

T: We went to a city hall [unclear] one, I guess in Massachusetts, Lancaster.

A: Lancaster, Massachusetts? So you didn't really have a ceremony?

T: We have not really an elaborate, but we have a quick one, you know. The whole idea is that you know, we, I wanted to go back to Cambodia, and be married in a Cambodian way. (A: Okay) That's the whole idea, but to be sure that you know, I will be able to bring her back. I need that legal document to prove that.

A: Yah. Now is Lancaster, that's near Jacob's Pillow?

T: Oh no.

P: No.

A: Or near your school?

T: That's my school. It is my school. We married by my school.

A: Okay. And the school is what?

T: Atlantic Union College.

A: Atlantic Union, okay. So was there a lot of Cambodians going to that school?

Side A ends, side B begins

A: Okay. You were saying you were the only Cambodian to go to Atlantic Union School.

T: I was the first Cambodian.

A: Okay.

T: Then I was the first Cambodian who graduated with a Bachelor from that school too.

A: Okay. So now you got married and then you went back to Cambodia. What did you do then? Did you go back to teaching?

P: Yes.

A: Okay. And then (--)

P: And I worked with Minister (--)

T for P: Culture. (P: Yah) Ministerial Culture.

A: Okay. Who was that?

T for P: His Excellency [name unclear].

A: Okay.

P: I'm an Assistant Minister.

A: You're Assistant Minister of Culture?

P: Yes.

A: Was that a big pay raise?

P: [Laughs] [Unclear].

A: Okay. And how did you become the Assistant Minister?

T for P: Yah, because I have written some document you know, dance document. (A: Okay) And Excellency [Unclear] saw what I did. (A: Okay) And he's impressed with my ability to do so, and he invited me to participate [unclear]. And you know, more than that he would like to teach younger generation you know, how to take care of culture.

A: Okay.

T for P: For example you know, if he doesn't, he doesn't know a lot about classical dance. But because as a Minister of Culture you know, he has any question you know, he can turn around and ask, you know, "What does it mean?"

A: Okay. Now what were your responsibilities as the minister?

T: Assistant Minister.

A: Assistant Minister.

T for P: My main job was to do my research (A: Okay) and writing. And [either] any official reception and all of that you know, [unclear].

A: Okay. And what did you, what were you researching? About the dance?

P: Classical dance.

A: Okay. And how did you do your research?

T for P: I interviewed all the Masters, (A: Really) and wrote you know, of what they told me. Almost like a record of the history.

A: Like this.

T for P: Yup. And also you know, like some definition of the dance, you know, what it means. Because you have to understand that in Cambodian cultures that we do not have books. (A: Right) The dance had been taught from one to another. (A: Yah) And when the older generation was gone, everything was gone. Okay, so that's why you know, she went there to, to do that, and to do with the tape to record what they did.

A: Okay. And did you travel all around Cambodia researching?

T for P: Basically you know, her, she was doing that in Phnom Penh City, you know, dealing with the older Masters. (A: Okay) Because the financial issue, the minister, the Minister of Culture, you know, did not allow her to go outside to any countryside yet, but basically the concentration was in the city. (A: Okay) They're mostly you know, her older Masters in Phnom Penh City.

A: How many different dances were there?

T for P: Initially there are two types of dance, but now they subdivided into three type of dance. One they call classical dance, folk dance, and [unclear]. [Unclear] mean that the performance that had been done only by men only.

A: Okay.

T for P: And the Master.

A: Okay. But how many different dances altogether?

T for P: Not too many. (A: Really?) Not too many. It's not, the dance not only is just a dance, but sometime they told you the story, like the legend, you know.

A: So after you did that what did you do? You came to the U.S.? (P: Yes) In what year did you come?

P: 1996.

A: 1996? Okay. And what did you do when you first came. You came to Lowell?

P: Came to Lowell, yes.

A: And what were your impressions of Lowell? What did you think about Lowell?

P: I saw a lot of Cambodians here.

T: What did you think about Lowell? What do you think, good or bad, crowded, dirty, clean?

T for P: You know I saw Angkor Group, you know, a culture just growing in Lowell, Massachusetts. A culture that I had been, participated in the past. That's one thing that attracted about [unclear].

A: Okay. Did you feel comfortable living in Lowell?

T for P: Yes, I feel comfortable because it's almost like living in Cambodia.

P: Especially the food.

A: Especially the food? (P: Yes) Okay. Not the snow?

P: Snow!

A: The snow in Massachusetts isn't the same as in Cambodia, right?

P: No.

T: There was snow over here.

A: So you came. Did you work when you came to Lowell?

P: Umhm.

A: What did you do?

P: I was teaching classical dance.

A: You were teaching within a month, a week, three months? I mean when you came to Lowell did you start teaching right away, or?

T for P: After my arrival in about one month you know, I start teaching.

A: Okay. And how did you, who did you get a hold of? Who did you talk with to start teaching?

T for P: [Tim] got to know her you know, during her visit in 1990. (A: Okay)

P: He called me.

T: He called you, yah. And then after that he found out [unclear] here. He invited her you know, to participate in a troupe.

A: Okay. What did you think of Tim when you first met him?

P: He's a good guy. He loved the culture [Khmer].

A: So when you were teaching, were you teaching the young kids at first, or adults too, or?

P: Both.

A: Okay. And how long did you, how long have you been teaching then, since that time?

P: In Lowell? (A: Yah)

T: [Unclear].

P: What's been some exciting times?

T: I think that's about, highlights about her Angkor Dance Troupe, but probably there are two significant highlights that we remember, or I remember. Of course I was the president of Angkor Dance Troupe myself too, (A: Okay) for six years.

A: Really?

T: Yah. I think the first one is when we, we were one of the Lowell participant that we win all city for Lowell. (A: Okay) You know, we were one of the major participants, I had to say that.

A: In that All American City?

T: Yah, All American City, you know, because Lowell, Lowell never won. You know, but that year you know, we participated and they won, you know. And suddenly that's, you know, we feel that we contribute a lot you know, to the victory. And the second time when we, when we received the [unclear] Award you know, [unclear]. And we were invited to the White House. Probably the other one of more highlight of the dance troupe.

A: Tell us about going to the White House?

T: Well I, I was not able to participate because of my school. [Unclear] could not go either because of the baby. And you know, for three days, we couldn't go. And we decided that Ruth Page, General Manager, Ruth brought about, approximately about four or five students, you know, to go to the White House, and they were suppose to perform there. (A: Yah) Anyway they had a wonderful trip. You know, all the troupe were, were covered by the National Endowment for the Art. And we went you know, like [unclear] like grand banquet that they participated. And in return we got an award, and we got \$10,000 from National Endowment for the Arts.

A: Wow. Wow. So that's exciting times.

T: That was one of the most, you know, the most, the most significant highlight.

A: Yah. Well any, any final thoughts about your time living and working around Lowell and teaching the dance?

T for P: I see a significant improvement within the troupe itself. (A: Really) When I first started there was about like ten students, but now we have like seventy students, you know, and it troupe is doing really well.

A: Okay. Thank you very much.

P: Thank you.

Interview ends